



rivers&trails

National
Park
Service



rivers, trails, and conservation assistance program

GROUNDWORK – EL PASO

Mission and Goals

El Paso County, City and citizen activists are interested in establishing a Groundwork Trust to attract resources and partners around the long-term goal of developing and maintaining additional green and open spaces within the county. In addition, the Groundwork Trust would become active in the continued development of the Rio Grande Riverpark and Trail system. El Paso is one of the poorest communities in the country, with a 7% unemployment rate, a 34% poverty rate, and a 77% minority population. The government of the county and city realize that to improve the economics of the community and bring businesses to El Paso there has to be proactive plan to improve the quality of life within the community. Both the county and city have established park master plans, and initiated bond monies for those improvements. However, there is no organization that has taken the lead to insure all available resources are being leveraged to secure the maximum benefit for the community. A Groundwork Trust could serve as a new outreach tool to build relationships with local groups, and assist with future park, green and open space development.

Groundwork steering committee is focusing its initial efforts on achievable projects that can demonstrate that the organization can implement partnership projects effectively from planning to implementation in its first few years of existence. Focus and priority will be given to projects on Brownfield sites in underserved urban and suburban areas. Priority will also be given to projects in the smaller towns and incorporated areas of the County. The feasibility study shows that these smaller incorporated areas of the County are in the greatest need of groundwork type organization. The government entities in these areas have limited resources and are struggling to deal with the needs of fast growing populations. Groundwork could serve these smaller incorporated towns and help them leverage resources and implement needed projects.

Current Status

- Cooperative Agreement signed with El Paso County October 2003 set up agreement to establish Groundwork El Paso.
- Feasibility Study will be completed in March 2004, with the group planning to officially become Groundwork El Paso in April.
- Kick off event in May or June.

Potential Projects

Projects being discussed include supporting environmental improvements to brownfields, colonias, historical areas, and downtown developments; parks, trails, and open space protection and development; neighborhood beautification, and at risk youth involvement.



Paisano Drainage

Specific potential initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- **Paisano Drainage Beautification Project.** An ongoing project intended to be a demonstration project of what Groundwork can do in El Paso. It's a deteriorated drainage area in front of Chamizal National Memorial Bowie H.S.

continued

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- **Railyard.** A Brownfield site that could easily be converted to usable public space.
- **Central El Paso Urban Pocket Park.** This small downtown site (intersection of Elm and N. Piedras) qualifies as Brownfield site because it was a former gas station. Owner is hoping to have the property developed as a model project using native plant materials and is willing to donate the land if the area gets developed and liability issues are addressed.
- **Colonias.** Unplanned neighborhoods are appearing all over El Paso County. They are in need of all types of services including streets, potable water, and recreational spaces.
- **San Phillipe Park.** Planned 159 acre OHV park with both 4x4 and pedestrian trails. Groundwork could help leverage more funding and implement future development phases of the park.
- **San Elizario Historical Mission.** This area could be developed into a park and focus attention on interpretation and historical significance of the site.
- **American RV.** “A place for winter Texans” 1000 acre RV Park with Amphitheatre and trails extending to the Franklin Mountains State Park is a concept proposed by American RV. It has not been implemented do difficulties with the public and private partnerships, perhaps Groundwork can be that bridge.
- **Rio Grande Trail System.** A planned 42 mile trail system along the Rio Grande and irrigation drainages within El Paso County and City that will provide recreational and transportation opportunities. Currently 6 miles are constructed with another 16 miles funded. Opportunity exists to build on existing momentum. Several Brownfield sites exist along this trail system.

- **Rio Vista.** A Brownfield site, previously a sheriff weapons depot, could be re-developed as a park area. It has been partially rehabilitated because it was used for movie Traffic. Its located in Socorro, TX and its approximately 10 acres.



Riverpark Trail

Partners

Alianza
City Of El Paso
El Paso Central Business Association
El Paso County
El Paso Police Dept
El Paso Water Utilities
Institute for Policy & Economic Development
National Park Service
Office of Congressman Silvestre Reyes
Paso Del Norte Health Foundation
Rio Grande Council. Of Governments
Rio Grande Girl Scouts
Texas Parks & Wildlife
USEPA - El Paso Border Office
Water District #1

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